

Mason Co. ATC Electrical Technology Instructor Brings Industry Experience and a Big Heart to the Classroom



After 31 years as a valued employee who worked as a foreman, supervisor and manager at Dayton Power & Light (DPL), David Collins decided to accept the early retirement package offered by the company in 2001.

“My boss actually cried because I retired,” says David. “DPL was a great company to work for and the work was very rewarding.”

David realized early on that retirement wasn’t all it was cracked up to be and after three months, he decided it just wasn’t for him. He and his grandson had played golf all summer until it was time for him to go back to school. This left a void and Collins needed something to do.

In the meantime, he heard about a job opportunity at the area technology center and became engaged in

conversation with Clifford Wells – who at the time was the principal of the Mason Co. ATC and is now a KY Tech area supervisor.

Instead of part time, Collins learned the job would be a full-time interim position and applied. So, David Collins became the interim electricity instructor. He hasn't looked back and has since become a full time permanent KY Tech employee.

“David Collins was the most pleasant surprise that I have ever hired,” says Clifford Wells. “He is a perfectionist and workaholic. At the same time, he is completely committed to his students. He doesn't walk into that shop without knowing exactly what he and his students are going to do for that day.”



Collins checks Mason Co. HS Senior Jennifer Morgan's 3-way/4-way switched lighting circuit.

“I absolutely love this job. It's ideal for me because I'm teaching the class that I attended in 1971 - only it was a night class,” says Collins. “I live right by this school and can walk every day.”

Upon accepting the job, Collins had to jump through all the necessary paperwork and testing to become certified.

“God Bless Deena Clark (who at the time served as personnel administrator). She led me through the entire process. I studied for at least 6 weeks before taking the NOCTI (National Occupational Competency Testing Institute).”

“I enjoyed working with David. When a person comes in to test, you get a sense of who they are. I knew from the onset that Mr. Collins was a winner,” says Clark.

Once hired, it didn’t take Collins long to get his classroom organized and now “I have all my lesson plans and tests on the computer.”

“I enjoy telling the kids stories. Because of my experiences, it helps them learn. I think I’m pretty good at explaining,” says Collins. “You can never take it for granted that a student knows something. You have to provide them with all the details. You have to teach at their level; which makes me have to think at their level so they will understand what I am trying to teach them.”

“I’m strict in my classroom because students come here to learn something. When you talk to them and I mean really talk to them, they become interested in what you are teaching because they know you are interested in them,” says Collins. “Teaching is easier for me now because I’m comfortable with students.”



Collins watches as Darren Applegate, a senior at Mason Co. HS, wires a switched lighting circuit.

Collins has been able to develop a relationship with Maysville Community College Professor Robbie Graves, who has provided guidance services to help promote the electricity program.

“He allows our students to spend time with him at the college by actually sitting in on classes and learning more about college life,” says Collins. “These efforts have helped take the fear out of attending college and caused some students to enroll who otherwise would not have gone into postsecondary education.”

Aside from teaching, Collins is keenly aware of the importance of business and industry support – in terms of both supplies for his classroom and an avenue of possible employment for his students. He has been able to participate in numerous projects by calling upon professionals he has met through the years.

During a Lion’s Club zone meeting, he became engaged in a discussion with Mike Sapp, who owns Mike Sapp Electric Co. The conversation quickly zeroed in on the kinds of students that David has in his class. He began telling Sapp about a young man who had greatly impressed him because he always helped other students when he completed his work; he put up the stools each and every day



and then swept the floors in the lab. Not only was the student knowledgeable about the trade, but his work ethic was impeccable.

Sapp was extremely interested in the student because of the glowing report he had heard from David. Collins explained to Sapp that the student had graduated in May 2004; however, he would make an attempt to contact him. Collins found the student working at a fast food restaurant and began telling him about the possibility of becoming employed in something he had been trained to do. The young man was delighted, went to the company, filled out an application and was hired.

“Mr. Sapp has hired students from my program and is very supportive of education programs throughout the county,” says Collins. “He was also a former student in this electricity program. That’s what I call giving back to help those in the community.”

David Collins has certainly made every attempt to cover all the important aspects of helping students to succeed. But, the most important part of the



Collins listens as three students explain how they wired a low voltage motor control circuit with relays and thermostat devices.

equation is hearing what the students have to say about their instructor. In good humor, students in his afternoon class all agreed that what they enjoy most is seeing “a little bald man coming through the door every day.” Other comments made by students included:

“I wanted to learn about electrical work and I’ve learned a lot in Mr. Collins’ class,” says Jeff Merrill, a senior at Mason Co. High School.

“I hate school period! If I didn’t have this class, I probably wouldn’t be here,” says Jamie Brooks, a senior at Mason Co. High School. “Mr. Collins makes it worth coming to school. I wish I could stay here all day. He is great.”

“Mr. Collins is the only thing that has kept me in school,” says Billy Kittle, a senior at Deming H.S. “He goes through both the good and bad with us.”

“Mr. Collins takes the time to explain something to me that I can understand,” says Juston Cooper, a junior at Mason Co. H.S.



At left: Collins helps Travis Cooley, a Mason County HS senior, learn to use an amp probe to measure current in a lighting circuit he has wired.

"Mr. Collins has the most infectious positive attitude I have ever seen in my life. He is first and foremost a wonderful human being, and secondly a great teacher. He has brought a lifetime of experience and positive industrial contacts into the lives of many teenagers, and this school and this community are better places for having known him," says Mason Co. ATC Principal Juston Pate. "Everyone I've ever spoken with about Mr. Collins makes it a point to tell me how great he is. After working with him for one year, however, no one needs to tell me how special he is. It's apparent everyday."



Electrical Technology Instructor David Collins has a big heart and it's obvious that he has made a positive impact on students.

**Good News Flash #121
May 26, 2005**